THE JUGGLER

A Story by Arthur Stringer

BENJAMIN SPINDEL had a Good Fairy. He was never quite sure what this Good Fairy should have been called. Sometimes she seemed best described as A-Sense-of-Humor. More often, however, he preferred to know her as Fame.

For Fame to Spindel was something which came to you overnight, like a cold in the head, or a milk bottle at the door. You simply woke up and found it there. The mere thought of it, waiting like a gnome on your doorstep, was something to send a tingle of romance through the small hours of the chilliest night, if you only made it a point to remember.

Not that Spindel ever quite forgot. For there were two things about Spindel that always surprised his friends. One was his industry; the other was his optimism.

Unlike so many others whose blood had been fevered by the virus of stage life, this doggedly industrious disciple of Romance never let the day be sufficient unto itself. Idleness, in fact, was a luxury he could not afford. He was at least a plodder. And he believed, as he used to put it, in taking the bull by the horns.

So his immediate object in life was not so much to discover the fairy on the threshold as to keep the wolf from the door itself. Yet he nursed the entirely romantic delusion that Fame was something on which one might stub one's toe in the dark. Success was a sort of accident, the same as finding a dime on the street-curb; you went to bed a plodding juggler of a dozen or two wooden puppets, and you woke up the Greatest Dramatist of the Age.

For Spindel's ambition, even when he came, a raw youth, from the middle west, was not merely to be an actor. He nursed, in fact, an abhorrence for greasepaint and call-boards and dressing rooms and hydrogenated coiffeurs. He made no secret of the fact that his work on the stage was only a means to an end. Like an illustrious Elizabethan prototype to whom he often referred, he merely played parts that in the end he might learn to write them. For Spindel, like Shakespeare, wanted to be a playwright.

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LIKE this prototype already referred to, Spindel was not essentially a man of letters. He prided himself on being one of the people. This claim was advanced, perhaps, in extenuation of certain oddities of orthography, for to the end Spindel was always a little weak in spelling. But he was both adaptive and courageous, and no one could accuse him of not keeping his ears cocked and his eyes open. He nosed through bracken; he basked over street quarrels like a parent over a cradle; he blinked at park lovers like a hawk at a young rabbit, always hoping to scare up a new "scene" or a new "situation." So, while the weekly pay envelope of the actor was keeping the pot boiling, his experiences behind the footlights were initiating him into the tricks of the theatrical trade. He was devouring knowledge as silently and as persistently as any army-worm devours herbage.

Yet after three years of playing small parts, and playing them none too well, he concluded that the back of the curtain had little more to teach him. He wanted to get out and see life "in the raw," yet nowhere, ironically enough, would he ever see its rawness less veiled than under the mask of the mummer. Here again, however, a sort of blithe practicality on his part kept interposing. He continued to mark time as a play-actor, bending his neck to the yoke for the sake of a small but ever assured weekly envelope.

It could be called nothing more than marking time, for all his ardor, all his energy, was now being poured into his own secret pursuits. He was now giving his time and thought to the writing of plays—magnificently planned dramas which, by some odd mischance, never saw the light of day, and laboriously conceived comedies which, unfortunately, no one ever heard of.

His vocational hours, in fact, became a sort of somnambulism; he went through them will all the impersonal detachment of a sleep-walker. He was, by this time, living only in his writing. As his parts grew smaller and smaller, his pay envelope, in turn, grew thinner and thinner. But despair was unknown to Spindel. He still believed in the fairy outside the door. He still passed vaguely elated and optimistic among his old-time friends of the stage wearing the veiled smile of an adventurer who has learned the secret of some lost treasure.

"There's a guy they'll never grind down," said Gunderman's stage manager, as he watched Spindel one day pocket his rejected script and trudge smiling and undaunted down to Broadway.

"They won't grind him down—he'll just wear down," retorted the apathetic Gunderman, to whom the years had brought wisdom and a weak digestion. And so fixed was Gunderman's mind, as to this fact that he appropriated without hesitation a page or two of Spindel's third-act dialogue. It was nothing more, he argued with himself, than taking a plank or two from a passing derelict.

As Spindel climbed the stairs to that twenty-second street back room which he dignified as his "studio," his bearing took on an added touch of insouciance. He even whistled and affected a bit of swagger.

And he had his reasons for this. For Spindel had been heaven-born optimist enough to bring a wife to New York with him out of the terra incognita of the middle west. And that wife was young and perhaps not always appreciative of the humoristic turns of over-ambiguous human destines. She saw the 'script under her husband's arm and she went to the window and looked out.

"My dear those managers are positively funny!" blithly avowed Spindel, as he put his play in its pigeonhole with the air of a victor putting his sword in its scabbard. "And all I say is, I'm thankful I can keep my sense of humor and see what a queer lot they are!"

"I wish they'd take the play," said his wife, with the unimaginative immediacy of her sex, as she went back to her work of turning a last winter's skirt.

"But I'm getting closer to 'em all the time," chirped the indomitable Spindel. "I'm getting wise to their curves. I'm getting so I can humor 'em!"

And Spindel set to work writing a new play. He had to skimp and economize a good deal, by this time, for he could now get nothing more than an occasional "super" part to keep the pot boiling. But he accepted the dingy back room studio and the meager meals cooked on a one-hole gas stove as calmly as an exiled prince accepts the exigencies of a banishment recognized as only a matter of time. He became oblivious of them. He went back to his play like an opium smoker back to his drug. He revised and rearranged and revamped. He closed his eyes, valiantly, and cut away whole act-ends, at one grim stroke, like a surgeon operating on his own flesh and blood.

So he watched over his newborn play, and nursed it, and redressed it in epigram, and decorated it with a newer ribbon or two of fancy. Then he carried it off to the agencies and the managers' office, with the blind pride of a mother carrying her first-born to a baby show.

That none of them could see any beauty in it struck him as ridiculous, as laughable. It almost took his breath away. But once more he came to realize, as he had so often tried to explain, that managers were a queer lot.

"If you can only keep your sense of humor, at this game!" he persisted with a wag of the head, as he read Gunderman's curt note of refusal.

So Spindel kept his sense of humor. He set to work again, as optimistic as ever. He once more became the prestidigitator; once more he laid out his morn and shoddy children of fancy, like a juggler laying out his "props."

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THEN he lost himself in his work.

Once more he ruthlessly disembowled and rearranged and repartic-ulated. Once more he shifted and sorted and pieced together. The result was something more wonderful, more Gothically embellished than ever before. He once more buttressed it up and furbished and polished it, looking it over with contented shakes of the head.

"I'm learning the trick, my dear!" he jubilantly declared to his hollow-eyed wife as she stirred the veal stew on its hot plate next to the window. "I can see it coming closer, now, every day!"

And again Spindel began the rounds of the agencies and the managers' offices. And again the script came back to Spindel's dingy studio, and again it went out, and again it came back. Once more it moved the playwright to a mild and humorous wonder.

"Aren't they a funny lot? A rum lot?" he demanded. "Can't you see it, once you get a line on them and their ways?"

"No, it's not funny," said his wife, limp and listless in her chair by the window. "It's not funny any more."

He laughed as he put a hand on her thin shoulder.

"Just keep your sense of humor, my dear, and you'll see they are funny! Look how they contradict each other, even in their excuses! Look how one says 'Cut it down!' and the other says 'Build it up! Build it up!'"

It was Spindel's blind theory that if you kept at a thing you won out—you simply had to win out, in the end. And such being his theory, he once more set to work. And finally, in vindication of this attitude, he actually went about showing a contract with a western producing agent, who had attached a "phony" curtain to one of Spindel's earlier first acts, and converted it into a vaudeville sketch for a Chicago comedian.

This sketch seemed to bring new life to Spindel. He not only appeased an expostulatory landlord and a long-threatening gas company, but he also indulged in the extravagance of two Hartz mountain canaries "to liven up the studio a bit," as he blithely explained to his wife; and he planned our intricate and extended shopping expeditions.

But the vaudeville sketch, after a run of three weeks, came to an abrupt and untimely end. Just why this was, the dazed author could never quite understand. And it saddened him a little to think that it had lived and died without once having come under the eye of its creator. Yet these one-act things, he cheerily added, were never worth worrying over. In fact, there was something humorous about it all, he still maintained. He thanked his lucky stars he could still see the funny side of it.

He refused to give it much thought, however, for already he had a new play to work on. This new play, like the others, became a sort of pot-au feu, into which went every fragment that could be shaved from the bones of his past efforts, every shred of an idea that could be caught up from the passing moment. He wrote on and on, still believing in the Fairy outside the door. He sent out his script, still nursing the delusion that he was going to find fame hanging by one hand to his mail box down in the dingy front hall. And as he shuffled down in his tattered slippers ten times a day, he thanked heaven that he could still see the humor of it all, and went up to chirrup and whistle somewhat pensively into the swinging canary cage and then turn once more back to his writing.

It was one rainy morning when even the canaries refused to sing that the ultimate idea came to him. Times, he had to confess, were getting a bit tight. Things were no longer as rosy as they ought to be. It was too late for shillyshallying; conditions seemed to call for a coup de main. And here he was with seven fine plays all about him, seven plays of his own. None of them could be all bad; even those human sheep known as managers confessed that one had a good scene here, and another had a good curtain there, and a third a good idea somewhere else. But none had quite floated him out to the sea of prosperity. Then, demanded Spindel of himself, why not lash the lot together? Why not tie them up in one raft, cut away what was not needed, and let that one final venture swing out to sink or swim?

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THIS amalgamative idea became first an intoxication and then an obsession. The work-worn playwright threw himself into the task with a fury that disturbed even his wife, who absented herself more and more from that unkempt and paper littered back room, where Spindel strode up and down in his tattered slippers enacting the roles he was reorganizing. She even upbraided him for scandalizing their neighbors with his enigmatically passionate utterances, with his frenzied self-altercations, with his climacteric shouts of scorn and triumph. He even forgot his wife and her existence. He uttered no protest as she took her departure for the day. He merely looked at her in his vacant and unseeing way when she, somewhat defiantly, told him that she was off to look for work of her own. Jim Ecklin was taking her to the Hippodrome.

For Spindel, in truth, was engaged in one of the most extraordinary juggling feats of all his feverish-fingered juggler's career. Into that one and final play he was crushing and crowding everything that was worth carrying off from everything he had ever written, much like a shipwrecked traveler packing into one portmanteau the cream of all his belongings. He was molding his whole life into one forlorn amalgam. He was making the last play a sort of Irish stew of all his dead issues. He scraped the bones of each desiccating skeleton for its last enriching tatter of meat. He journeyed back through each abandoned structure for some last sustaining beam of action. He crawled over each devastated scene for some chance sparkle of epigram embedded in its ruins.

Then he once more polished it and furbished it, and so pretentious and flashing did the new facade stand to him that for the first time in his life he indited a peremptory letter in which he put forth certain peremptory demands, and sent both letter and playscript off to Gunderman, knowing only too well that this time it was all or nothing.

In the meantime winter had advanced, and the cold had set its teeth in the flank of the attenuated Spindel abode; the rigors of mid-December reminded the playwright that both the body and its habitation were in keener need of fuel. So Spindel took advantage of the holiday season and earned a few dollars as an extra ticket-taker in a 14th street moving picture house. The pay was not lordly; but his gas bills and his arrears of rent he could for the time ignore. Those more exigent claims which rose from the pit of the human stomach, however, could not be ignored. He also remembered that he had his wife and his two canaries to feed. He hated moving pictures; they were the darkest enemy of the dramatic artist. But he could live it down, once he got started, once he had made his hit. And as he trudged homeward, with his half-pound of Hamburger steak, he looked more and more anxiously into the mail box. But it always seemed to be empty.

Spindel wondered if even a sense of humor could not lose its elasticity in time. So, one morning he took the

BUT LATER IN THE EVENING, AS SHE STOOD PEERING INTO THE CANARY CAGE, SHE BROKE INTO TEARS, FOR NO APPRECIABLE REASON.

bull by the horns, as it were. He made his toilet, such as it was, with the minutest care, and invaded Broadway, and the Gunderman stronghold.

Gunderman, he was told, had been called to Chicago. He had either taken the script with him or mislaid it. But no word had come to the office as to its fate. And for a week or two nothing was likely to be done.

Spindel that night spent a long time over his task of feeding the canaries. His own hunger he appeased in a much briefer period. It was after 9 o'clock when his wife came home, silent and self-contained. She told him, casually, that she had already eaten supper. But later in the evening, as she stood peering into the canary cage, she broke into tears, for no appreciable reason. It was the next day that Spindel began pawning things, surreptitiously taken from their dingy back room.

For some days he wandered about the city looking for work, as destitute of direction as a lost child looking for home. Late in the afternoon of the fourth day he trudged back to his "studio," a little dizzy in the head and a little weak in the knees. But he wanted to make sure the canaries were fed.

He found it hard to climb the steps. In the mail box at the side of the shabby old hall he found two letters waiting for him. He climbed the stairs, step by step, and as he let himself into his room he saw a square of paper tacked on his door. He swung back the door and peered up at it.

He realized as he studied it that it was a "dispossess" notice. He slowly pulled it from the soiled panel, stepped into the room and closed the door after him.

"Allie!" he called, for the light was not strong.

He looked about and saw, with a deep breath of relief, that his wife was not there. Then he slowly crossed the room and sat down by the window, under the canary cage. Then he put the letters on the ledge in front of him. He was very leisurely about it, yet he could feel his heart in his throat, pounding like an automatic riveter.

The first letter was in his wife's handwriting. He opened the envelope and slowly unfolded the single sheet it held. On it he read:

"I've tried hard to stay with you, Benny. But a woman's got to have clothes and things. And I couldn't stand it any longer. I've thought it all over. I'm going to New Orleans with Jim this afternoon. Jim says he'll see I never want for anything. It's the only thing left for me. I hate to go this way, but I can't help it, and I can't stand it any longer.

"ALLIE."

Spindel read the penciled sheet for the second time. Then he slowly folded it up and put it on the window ledge in front of him. He sat there for several minutes, without moving. Then he turned the second letter over in his hand.

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HE found it hard to open, for his eyes were not clear. A yellow mist, like street fog, seemed to float between him and the paper. The first thing that struck him was the blue tint of the inclosure. He looked at it, vacantly, for several seconds. Then he held it up to the light and saw it was a check. Then he slowly unfolded the letter and read it.

It neither startled nor elated him. He dimly remembered that it was from Gunderman's office. He was vaguely conscious that Gunderman himself was writing and saying that the four-act play, entitled "Fool's Gold," by Benjamin Spindel, would be put into rehearsal the following Monday, for a New York production. It also, as far as he could make out, requested a receipt for the one thousand dollars in advance royalties, duely inclosed, the additional five hundred to cover advance on the London production on the definite understanding that the author surrender to the said Gunderman all English rights and—but Spindel was no longer interested.

He slowly unfolded the first letter and slowly read it through again.

"I'm going to New Orleans with Jim this afternoon."

He read it aloud, as though the words were written in a foreign tongue, as though it were a text he could not comprehend. Then he looked at the blue oblong of the check. He looked at it for several minutes, without moving. Then he laughed, quietly, softly, without mirth and without emotion. He had lost his belief in the Fairy just outside the door.

He sat in deep thought for several moments. Then he pinned the two letters together, and taking a clean sheet of paper, wrote on it nine short words. Then he laughed again, quietly, but still without emotion. The words he wrote were:

"This is too much for my sense of humor!"

He looked meditatively about and finally put the three slips of paper on the table in the center of the room. Then he carefully lifted the canary cage from its hook and placed it on the floor of the dusky hallway, outside his door. He locked the door, as he stepped inside, and again looked meditatively about the shadowy room. Then he took a number of newspapers and slowly tore them into strips. With these he carefully battened the cracks about the door, and the joints of the loose window sashes. He did not even overlook the keyhole. Then as he crossed the room, he reread aloud the words he had written:

"This is too much for my sense of humor!"

He calmly drew the blinds. Then he groped his way back to where the green tubing, connecting the hot-plate with the gaspipe ran along the wall. He padded about until he found the stopcock. Then he turned it on full.

He recrossed the room to the sagging spring couch, remembering to cover himself with the worn comforter, as he lay down on the soiled bedding. He closed his eyes. He only knew that he was tired, very tired. Then he fell asleep.

Spindel, who so often dreamed that fame was going to be left at his door, like a bottle of milk, woke up to find his wife there at midnight, crying like a frightened child.

"Oh, I couldn't do it, Benny; I couldn't do it!" she wailed, bathed in her tears of contrition, as he stumbled to the door and swung it open. She clutched at his dazed and silent figure. She clung to him in a self-immuring ecstasy of despair.

"Oh, Benny, what'll we do? What'll we do?" she wailed.

"Do? How?" asked the still-dazed Spindel.

"They've ordered us out!" she wept. "And we've no money. And they came and turned the gas off on us this morning!"

And Spindel, groping for her shaking body in the darkness, locked his arms about her and laughed.

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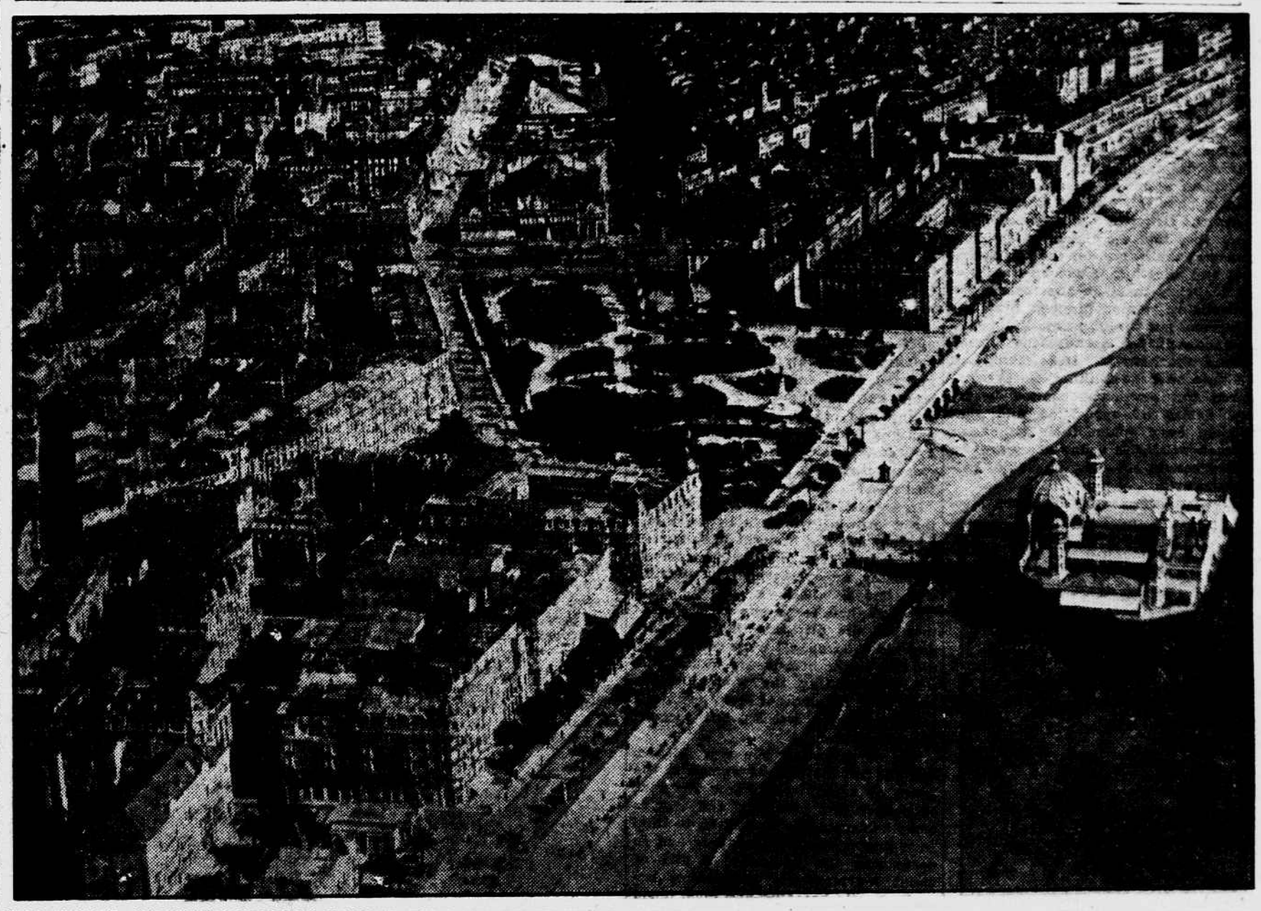
STERLING HEILIG Says Money and Jewels Bring Total Loot of Underworld to Millions of Dollars—The Gas Pistol From Germany—A Red-Haired Princess Who "Beat" Them All—The "Eye of Moscow" and the Bolshevist Sapphires—The Drugged Millionaire—Great Losses and Winnings at Gambling



THE "JEWEL AND MONEY FRONT" OF NICE, PHOTOGRAPHED FROM AN AIRPLANE. THE LITTLE JETEE CASINO, JUTTING OUT INTO THE MEDITERRANEAN, IS CLAIMED TO BE A MORE POPULAR SPOT WITH GAMBLERS THAN MONTE CARLO.

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BY STERLING HEILIG.

NICE, France, March 25, 1921.

PROBABLY more valuable jewelry is to be found, at present, here on the Riviera than anywhere else in the world.

The pearls and diamonds seen on women's arms and hands fairly take the breath away. It is often hard to believe that they are real, but they are real, all right!

A blaze of priceless gems surrounds the gaming tables, particularly the baccarat of the Nice Municipal Casino and the Monte Carlo Sporting Club, more elegant than the roulette halls. The new-rich have invested heavily. In part, they seek to side-step excess profits taxes; and, one and all, to partially evade the income tax. Also, there is a general feeling that if troubles come, jewels are so easily concealed and portable.

This blaze of jewels is a magnet to a host of thieves from all parts of the world, and previously honest people, envious and tempted, reach out unsuspected hands and smouch a little fortune. Why, jewels fall off bejeweled women in the streets!

Two small boys of Toulon, on a visit to Nice, picked up what seemed a pretty piece of cut glass. A Toulon jeweler pronounced it to be a brilliant worth 36,000 francs. A thirteen-year-old girl of Nice found an emerald and diamond cross, trampled and bent, in the garden of Albert I. It is worth 250,000 francs, and it has not been claimed. At the Municipal Casino a waiter in satin knee-breeches and shoulder-knot rescued a girdle of big sapphires and small diamonds—stones as big as coat buttons, that look like stage jewelry.

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THESE were honest finders, who declared their finds. What of the others, simple folks, who think that finding's keeping?

No trace has been found of Mrs. Earnshaw's jewels, a half a million francs worth (pre-war prices) stolen from her Cimiez-Nice villa without a trace. A British insurance company has offered $10,000 reward for information leading to the recovery of Mme. Ayulo's jewels. Doucet, the millionaire Paris dressmaker, publishes 100,000 francs for the recovery of his wife's beautiful baubles, and Mrs. Earnshaw offers 20,000 francs for the recovery of her half million—visibly, she puts her hope in the police.

Mme. Doucet's jewels, valued above a million and a half of francs, consisted of a necklace of 47 large oriental pearls, two smaller necklaces of rosy and white pearls, three rings with gray and white pearls and a pair of earrings of magnificent white pearl drops. She placed them in a table drawer of her bedroom in the suite she occupies at the hotel, on retiring for the night. Next morning all were simply—gone. She could furnish no guess about the thief, except that she left her bedroom door unlocked in case that she should need her maid. No noise, no marks, no clue!

The Ayule case is more mysterious, if possible. The millionaire family, connected with the Peruvian legation at London, were drugged, husband, wife and child, in their bedrooms of the hotel. They, too, retired early. Their Japanese servant tucked them in and locked the door behind him. Jewels and cash to the tune of $350,000 were in a secret drawer, a hotel device, quite new. Only one person, the Duke of Connaught, had occupied the suite before them. In the morning, when the family woke, they woke up drugged and sick. The jewels and cash were gone. No marks, no clue, no noise!

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THESE bigger robberies all took place in the same ten days, by curious coincidence. Yet it is not so simply as might seem to argue one great gang that makes a sweep, then rests and starts again. Because, you'll see, the facts are complicated and jewel thefts are going on continually.

Many thefts and numerous thieves. Here money seems to have no value and ideas are falsified by glitter. Glitter, in the big stores has always explained kleptomania. Here fashion makes women glitter. Even the new straw hats have thin gold strands or silver bands, all shining in the sun like an electric flash, woven into the straw. Evening gowns glitter with shiny sequins, pearl and crystal beads, and so on. Mauve and bright silver thrill you. White brocade and strings of pearls give a queer feeling. And over all, the jewels, more jewels—where do they get them?

Expense reaches its height. At the battle of flowers a touring car covered with $1,800 worth of blossoms had five pretty women in it 'round a great palm tree—a real one—cut down, brought here, green and beautiful, for just one day. Another car, they say, cost 38,000 francs to decorate. And 25,000 people that night attended the masked ball in and outside and around the Nice Opera House—as Pierrots in white satin, or as rajahs, cowboys, monks, Columbines, Mignons and Marguerites.

Gambling at the two casinos of Nice is seeing the heaviest steady play of history. Particularly at the Municipal Casino, the cool daring of an amazing little Frenchman attracts a crowd of fascinated spectaters nightly—themselves high players, men of money. Last summer, they say, he went to Deauville with 2,000 francs and came away with three millions. Half this sum he invested in such manner that he can never touch the capital, assuring himself a sure income for life. The other half he brought to Nice to gamble with and he is believed to have already run it up to six million francs.

He beats the famous Greek you all have heard about. Owing to the fact that he does not appear to care the least bit whether or not he loses his velvet, he naturally is amazingly audacious. Three nights ago was witnessed a notable sight. This little Frenchman was playing against the Greek himself, supposed to be the coolest, luckiest player of the world. It is chemin-de-fer, where you can call "banco" against the entire pot and so can be a duel. Both staked in "packets" of ten 1,000 franc bills, folded in four and held together by a rubber band. And that terrific night the little Frenchman beat the Greek out of a million—and then some "packets."

The notorious "Bob" Sievier of London, having raked in more than a million francs at Monte Carlo roulette, rested a few days, started fresh and lost back all of it to the establishment. For ten days he piked along. Now, at the baccarat of Nice, he is prince again. Many of these big players win or lose anything up to 500,000 francs at a sitting.

Which brings us to the jewels again.

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THE woman gamblers are terrific. English women predominate. There is a fair sprinkling of French, Italian and Spanish women, a few Russians, no American women at all, but essentially it is a gambling season of English women. Many have never played before. No matter. When their faces get that look they bet their limit. Those who win at the start are bitten with the gambling poison and cannot bear to miss a sitting. Their lives are centered on the hectic pleasures of the tables. You can tell them at a glance. Their eyes are bright, cheeks flushed; and as the days go on, a strained look comes to their faces and little hard lines at the corners of the mouth. You can tell the woman gamblers—at your hotel lunchroom, at the opera—by their corners.

Don't let jewels or money lie around where a girl sports such corners. There are nightmare figures here, yet young and of good family. One, in particular, haunts me. She is a haunt blonde of, say, 35 years, of beautiful English features, and yet colorless in her excitement, flittering from table to table, staking strong, too nervous to sit down. She mutters to herself and her itching fingers are never still.

Woman thieves, quite unsuspected, sneak many a gem whose loss is attributed to the professionals. Such is supposed to have been the fate of Lady Mango's necklace, worth £36,000.

It was during the carnival. "When the lights were turned down (they did not go out) we were all standing together," the story runs. "Lady Mango was surrounded by her own party; and I noticed the pearl necklace was still on her neck after the lights went up again. I believe she was still wearing it when she said: 'We will go and put our cloaks on.' Did some one of a gang overhear her? There was some crowding in the cloakroom, but Lady Mango felt nothing.

"She had not missed the necklace when she left the hotel. She was in her car and had almost reached the villa when her brother-in-law said: 'Why, where are your pearls?' She put her hands to her throat and realized that they were gone. The chauffeur rushed them back to the hotel. The dancing had not yet stopped. But no trace could be found of the pearls."

A Greek diplomat's wife who sat next to Lady Mango at the gala dinner noticed that she had the necklace still at nearly 10 p.m. They remained at the hotel until nearly 1:30 a.m.

"People were pelting each other with flowers. Some one in the throng, taking advantage of the horseplay to cloak his or her movements, may have stolen the necklace."

A red-haired princess who sometime claimed to be the wife of a grand duke has swindled the tradespeople of Nice wonderfully and moved about where jewels were common as apples. They describe her as "royal looking, with copper-colored hair"—who could suspect such hair?

She came originally from Berlin or Vienna or Leipzig or Danzig. She had "done time" at Berlin before the war. At sixteen she had a fourteen-room house, carriage and pair and a handsome motor car, in which she showed off on afternoons in the Unter den Linden. During the war she was at Brussels. At Nice "imperially connected," and had even been seen, some say, taking tea with a real grand duke at Cannes. She swindled a banker out of $8,500. She changed hotels six times and never once was prosecuted. "Go, beat the —— Hotel as you beat us!" each manager concluded. "And if you succeed we'll call it square!" She disappeared with the arrest of Jean de Jong, of whom more presently, and was in the confidence of Mme. de Chateaubriand at the moment the latter's private secretary was planning (as de Jong affirms) to loot those 2,000,000 francs of pearls and emeralds. It is just a glimpse.

But now, an inexperienced little English girl has started in on jewel collecting in a way that promises to take her far. She arrived at Nice with a valise, a handbag and one stylish brand-new tailored gown. She put up at an expensive hotel, one where you dress for dinner. And I think her strongest comedy was how she came down to dinner those first nights—the only female not in silk or chiffon, or whatever they call those things in which good women play the cat against each other. She had porters going constantly to the station for her luggage, which, however, was delayed. And her demeanor was so simple, modest, yet assured, that she seemed all right—not a criminal—to come down to dinner in a tailored suit.

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IN the lounge the ladies liked her. She was "waiting for papa," who would shortly join her. A rich American widow took her on excursions to Grasse and Cannes and asked her advice shopping. The girl had new clothes and things arriving daily. Another American family took her to teas and widened her acquaintanceship.

When the hotel pressed for payment, she showed money. But she did not pay it—she had a better use for money. At Casino baccarat (she went only with married women, preferably elderly), folks went partners with her, somehow—and they bought the chips for joint adventure. When they won, they divided honestly. Otherwise, there was no dividing. The girl showed money, but held on to it absent-mindedly, and rich widows are so careless. More and more clothes and things arrived for Nellie. And this was her great idea, all her own—to have nothing to do with the boys. She cultivated only her own sex, playing the useful kitten. And it is astonishing how such a one can borrow money, win money, hold on to money, and slip in and out where jewelry is, when older ladies love her. When the crash came, she was safe at the hotel of San Remo, with a lonely American family. That is where the jewels were lost. But it was Italy, and so escapes this story.

The new rich, says Constance, Duchess of Westminster, at Monte Carlo, are crazy to make acquaintances. Being able and anxious to entertain the new poor, isn't it natural for them to get stung, a little? Gossip and the papers are full of Russian, Polish and other aristocrats working as porters in Nice hotels, where formerly they lolled in lordly suites, or in lonesome lodgings, all but starving—not to sacrifice their last possession, some great blazing gem, the family glory. Now and then they put on their dress suits and slip out for one Cinderella night at the Casino.

The thing has happened—enough to make a belief. One genuine specimen got into trouble and dramatically showed his family parchments, his decorations and—his porter's strap harness for toting trunks. Count Xavier Brandicki walked the streets, with "the Eye of Warsaw" in his shabby pockets. It was the great historic sapphire of his family—and he lost it.

"The Eye of Moscow" was a different proposition. He was Abrahamovitch, but called himself Prince Robanoff at Nice. "Please do not give me my title," he said confidentially to the hotel man. He was tall, slender, athletic, handsome, full of jewels and cash, and led a lovely life. But Lenin called him "The Eye of Moscow," and he was in France on business.

When the Nice authorities arrested him, they called him Dr. Zalensky, leader of the soviets in France. They found forged passports on him and all kinds of debris of a gay life, but the jewels with which he dazzled many had disappeared with Zelma Bertin, beautiful young creature, described as his wife. She was arrested—without jewels—later, and let go. But the jewels existed!

So, when jewels turn up for sale, there are triple reasons incompatible, equally reasonable, why they may be really the bargain of a lifetime.

They may be soviet jewels—Switzerland and Italy are full of the bloodstained sparklers; and many honest men and women have quietly bought them. They may be the last resource of some great honest family. The Branicki sapphire was both. Count Xavier discovered "the Eye of Warsaw" cut up into nine pieces—136 carats remaining, out of 291 carats of the original invaluable sapphire. The soviets had wasted 55 carats by camouflaging it in pieces.

The third source of supply is the gas pistol.

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THE gas pistol, they say, was invented for Nice.

It is an astonishing story, but by no means explains all the jewel robberies of the season, but only a series of the very big ones. Mme. Doucet's pearls and diamonds, the Peruvian family's jewels and cash and Mrs. Earnshaw's half-million disappeared, within a space of ten days, under identical circumstances, with the all but disappearance of Mme. de Chateaubriand's two millions worth of pearls. The thieves operated tranquilly at night and left no trace.

Well, Jean de Jong, an interesting Dutchman, being arrested at Nice, was found to have on him the first of the new gas pistols, bearing the German inscription "Scheintod Pistole."

According to a confidential circular of the police to hotel men, the "counterfeit death" weapon sends you asleep and entirely unconscious for about ten minutes, without the slightest harmful after effects. It is quite noiseless and consists of three barrels, firing three separate gases which have not yet been identified.

Some claim that the greatest crook gang in the world have obtained an option on the "Ssheintod," a high-science by-product of the kultur in the late war, and that it is to be looked for, presently, in New York, Philadelphia, Washington, Pittsburgh, Cleveland, Boston and other jeweled American cities.

On the other hand, Jean de Jong, while admitting that he had taken rooms at the hotel for the express purpose of sending Mme. de Chateaubriand to sleep, persists that the private secretary of the lady proposed him the job. And the private secretary is herself a lady of family, formerly of fashion, who lost her fortune in the war.

It is all mysterious, sensational.

The hotels buzz with tales of jewel thefts not in the papers. "No publicity, I beg!" is a phrase heard oftener than you could think. Women are wearing all the jewels they own upon their persons, in the daytime. At night there are processions, bearing jewel boxes, to the hotels' burgrarproof safes.

One lady at our hotel, whose hands blaze with wonderful rings, eight deep on certain fingers, and who has to unbutton to dig up the lower pearl necklaces from her fat old chest when she tells her troubles, says that "carrying it has become a burden." "But it is so unkar to show more than five strings at a time!"

"When I come back from the casino at 2 a.m." she says, "how can I take all this stuff off at the hotel desk and trust that sleepy clerk to put them in the safe? He would fumble and spill them! Shall I take them up to my suite, and put them in the box, and send my maid down with them? She is sleepy, too. And a lone girl, in the dead of night, along those empty corridors!

"I don't like to do it!" she whimpers, "yet if I keep the stuff in my rooms it will be the Scheintod Pistole, some night! Oh, what worries I have! Life is just one worry after another!"

Spring Salads.

Here are some good spring salad combinations—some of them appropriate because they make use of the spring vegetables, some of them because they are such appetizing combinations anyway as to appeal to the spring appetite:

Balls of cream cheese, with a little bar-le-duc jelly atop each, on lettuce leaves that have been well dressed with French dressing.

Young green onions arranged on endive with French dressing.

Big chunks of grapefruit on lettuce or whole sections, minus the skin, on endive. French dressing.

Rounds of Hawaiian pineapple, with a mound of stiff mayonnaise, sprinkled with chopped cherry, in the cavity.

Halves of drained canned pears with a ball of cream cheese and chopped nut meats in the core cavity. French or mayonnaise dressing.

Very cold chopped watercress, dressed with lemon juice and oil, on endive.

Sliced tangerines, with a little mound of mayonnaise in the center of each slice, on lettuce leaves.

Big sardines, two for each service, on lettuce, flanked by a stuffed egg half on each side. Dressed with French dressing with plenty of lemon.